

# The **PIT** and the **PENDULUM**

NUMEROUS STORIES HAVE BEEN WRITTEN ABOUT THE SPANISH INQUISITION, DURING WHICH THOUSANDS OF INNOCENTS SUFFERED CRUEL TORTURES AT THE HANDS OF THEIR TORMENTORS. THIS IS THE STORY OF ONE OF THOSE INNOCENTS, AS PENNED BY THE GREAT EDGAR ALLAN POE, IN HIS IMMORTAL CLASSIC -**THE PIT AND THE PENDULUM!**



EDGAR ALLAN POE BY HOWARD KINSTER

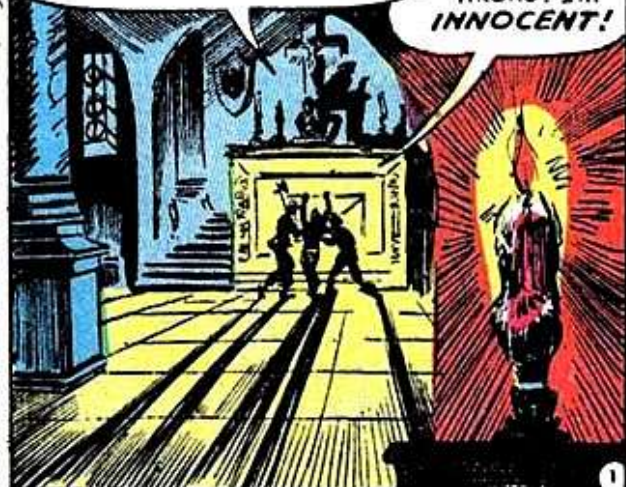
HOW WELL I REMEMBER IT! THE GREAT SILENT MOMENT WHEN THE TRIAL WAS OVER, AND I STOOD TREMBLING BEFORE THE JUDGE -- AWAITING THE VERDICT...

THE COURT, AFTER CAREFUL DELIBERATION, FINDS YOU, MANUEL BAROJA, **GUILTY** OF THE HIGHEST CRIMES AGAINST THE SOVEREIGN STATE OF SPAIN!



... FOR YOUR WICKEDNESS AND EVIL DEEDS, I PASS UPON YOU THE SENTENCE OF **DEATH!**

BUT I'VE DONE **NOTHING** WRONG. I'M **INNOCENT!**



AGAIN AND AGAIN I SCREAMED IN PROTEST, BUT THEY DRAGGED ME OUT LIKE A COMMON CRIMINAL-- DOWN TO THE LOWER DUNGEONS.

SCREAMING WON'T GET YOU ANYWHERE! NOT WHERE YOU'RE GOING!

BUT I'VE DONE NO WRONG-- I SWEAR IT!



IN YOU GO, PIG!

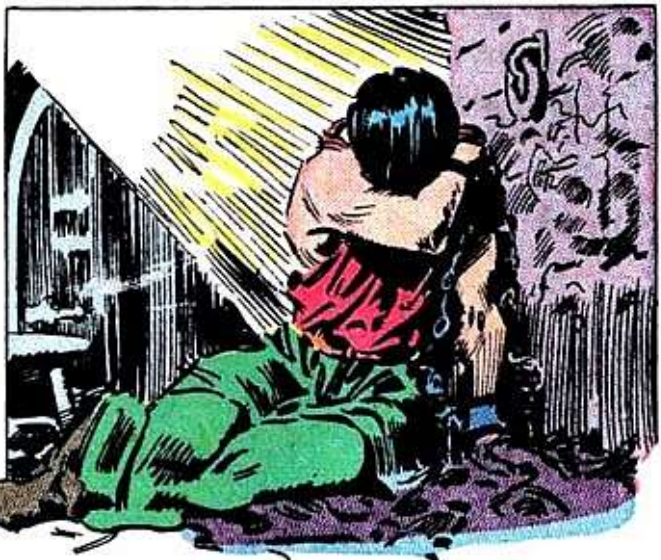
WE'VE GIVEN YOU THE ROYAL DUNGEON, BAROJA. FIT FOR A KING IT IS. HA, HA!



SOON THE ECHOES OF THEIR FOOTSTEPS WERE GONE. ALL THAT REMAINED WAS MY FEAR, AND THE GREAT SILENCE THAT PRESSED IN ON ALL SIDES...

OUR MASTERS HAVE MADE SPECIAL PLANS FOR THIS ONE, VIVALDO! BEFORE THEY'RE THROUGH, HE'LL KNOW WHAT TERROR MEANS!

LEAVE IT TO OUR MASTERS. THEY'VE MADE KILLING AN ART!



TO KEEP MYSELF FROM GOING MAD, I BEGAN TO EXPLORE MY CELL. THE WALLS WERE OF METAL, WITH HIDEOUS CARVINGS ENGRAVED UPON THEIR SURFACES SLOWLY, I GROPED MY WAY ALONG...

I CAN BARELY SEE IN THIS LIGHT. I'LL HAVE TO GO SLOWLY! VERY SLOW--



SUDDENLY MY FEET SHOT OUT FROM UNDER ME..

AIEEEEE!



**I** HIT THE FLOOR WITH GREAT FORCE, BUT THIS WAS THE LEAST OF IT. WHAT I SAW, BUT A FEW FEET BEFORE ME, CATAPULTED MY BODY INTO A SPASM OF QUAKING FEAR...



**N-NO! ONE MORE STEP AND IT WOULD HAVE BEEN ---**

**THERE** BEFORE ME, NO MORE THAN A HAIR'S BREADTH AWAY, WAS A BOTTOMLESS, YAWNING PIT. WITH A CONVULSIVE SHUDDER I FELT MY BRAIN SWIM, AND I FAINTED FOR THE FIRST TIME...



**HOW** LONG I HAD LAIN THERE I DON'T KNOW, BUT WHEN I CAME TO, THE SECOND PHASE OF MY TORTURE HAD BEGUN...



**I'M** TIED TO SOME SORT OF PLANK— BUT **WHY?** WHAT DEVILISH PLOT DO THEY HAVE IN MIND NOW?



**RATS!** THESE LOWER DUNGEONS MUST BE FILLED WITH THEM! IS THAT THEIR PLAN? AM I TO BE EATEN ALIVE--**BY THEM?**

**NO** SOONER HAD THIS THOUGHT CROSSED MY MIND, WHEN I HEARD A SUDDEN SOUND FROM ABOVE...



**IT'S** COMING FROM THAT MACHINE! IT'S SWINGING BACK AND FORTH, BUT THAT GLEAMING EDGE! I-IT CAN'T BE-- **BUT IT IS! IT'S A BLADE!**

**WITH** EACH SWEEPING ARC THE GLEAMING BLADE CAME CLOSER AND CLOSER-- ITS RAZOR-LIKE EDGE AIMED DIRECTLY AT MY HEART...



WITH DEATH STARING ME IN THE FACE, I WAS DRIVEN TO A SUDDEN EFFORT. SOMEHOW I MANAGED TO FREE ONE HAND, AND I STRUGGLED VAINLY TO REACH A BOWL THAT STOOD ON ONE SIDE...



IF I CAN REACH THAT BOWL OF FOOD BEFORE THE RATS DO, I MAY HAVE A CHANCE. ONLY A LITTLE MORE NOW-- JUST A LITTLE BIT MORE.



I-I'VE REACHED IT!

QUICKLY I SMEARED THE FOUL SMELLING BROTH OVER THE THINGS THAT BOUND ME. THE ODOR FILLED THE CELL, AND NOW I HEARD THE MAD SCURRYING OF TINY FEET...



THE RATS! THEY SMELL IT! IF THEY'LL ONLY COME! MERCIFUL HEAVEN, MAKE THEM COME!

IN A HEADLONG RUSH THEY SWARMED OVER ME, THEIR SHARP TEETH GNAWING INTO THE STRAPS, AND MY THROBBING FLESH, WHILE UP ABOVE THE HISSING BLADE DROPPED CLOSER AND CLOSER...



EAT, YOU DEMONS. FILL YOUR BELLIES. MAKE IT A FEAST-- HA, HA! HO, HA. HA, HA!

I COULD FEEL THE STRAPS GOING, ONLY A FEW STRANDS REMAINED. BUT NOW THE BLADE WAS POISED FOR ITS FINAL STROKE! WITH A QUIVERING ACTION IT STARTED FORWARD...



WITH MY LAST STRENGTH I THREW MY WEIGHT AGAINST THE STRAPS, AND...



SNAP! SWOOSH!

FOR A BRIEF MOMENT I WAS FREE, BUT...



THE BLADE! IT'S BEING WITHDRAWN. THEY'VE BEEN WATCHING ALL THIS TIME. THEY KNOW I'VE ESCAPED!

SLOWLY THE TERROR-FILLED MINUTES PASSED, AND THEN I NOTICED A NEW HORROR. A SULPHUROUS GLOW BEGAN TO FILL THE CELL, AND I WAS STRUCK WITH A BLAST OF HEAT FROM THE METAL WALLS...



THE HEAT... FROM THE WALLS! IT CAN MEAN BUT ONE THING. THEY'VE BUILT FIRES BEHIND THEM!

BUT AS I BACKED AWAY FROM THEIR FIERY HEAT, THE WALLS THEMSELVES FOLLOWED! THEY WERE ACTUALLY MOVING, CLOSING IN, FORCING ME SLOWLY BUT STEADILY TOWARD THE YAWNING PIT!



KILL ME! KILL ME! BUT I AM INNOCENT! INNOCENT!



HOLD ON! YOU'RE SAFE!

SUDDENLY I HEARD THE HUM OF VOICES, THE BLAST OF TRUMPETS! THE FIERY WALLS RUSHED BACK, AND AS I FELL INTO THE PIT AN OUTSTRETCHED HAND CAUGHT MINE...



L-LET ME DIE. DON'T TORTURE ME FURTHER!

YOU WILL BE TORTURED NO MORE. I AM **GENERAL LASALLE!** THE ARMIES OF FRANCE HAVE ENTERED **TOLEDO,** THE CRUEL TYRANTS WHO IMPRISONED YOU ARE NOW MY CAPTIVES! **OPEN THE CELLS! FREE THE PRISONERS! THE REIGN OF TERROR IS OVER! SPAIN IS FREE ONCE MORE!**



HIS WORDS WERE LIKE A TRUMPET CALL FROM HEAVEN. I COULD FEEL THE TEARS RUSHING TO MY EYES, AS I GAVE SILENT THANKS FOR MY MERCIFUL DELIVERANCE...

